

FAA News



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Fact Sheet: Sport Pilot, Light-Sport Aircraft Rule

The U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) today issued new requirements for light-sport aircraft, pilots and repairman.

Light-sport aircraft are small, simple, low-performance, low-energy aircraft limited to:

- 1,320 lb.(600 kg), (1,430 lb. seaplanes) maximum takeoff weight
- 1 or 2 occupants
- single engine (non-turbine)
- maximum stall speed (without lift enhancing devices) of 45 knots
- maximum airspeed in level flight of 120 knots
- fixed landing gear
- fixed pitch propeller.

According to the rule, "light-sport aircraft" are: airplanes, gliders, gyroplanes, balloons, airships, weight-shift-control, and powered parachutes. Helicopters and powered lifts are excluded because of complexity. Weight-shift-control aircraft and powered parachutes are also defined in the rule.

The FAA has created two new aircraft airworthiness certificates for:

Special Light-Sport Aircraft. A new special airworthiness certificate for a light-sport category aircraft that is "ready to fly" when the manufacturer determines the aircraft meets a consensus standard developed jointly with FAA and industry (gyroplane category is excluded).

- Aircraft holding this airworthiness certificate may be used for personal use and for compensation while conducting flight training, rental (similar to primary category), or towing (of light-sport gliders or unpowered ultralights).

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Experimental Light-Sport Aircraft. Aircraft holding this certificate may be used only for personal use. There are three ways to earn this new certificate:

- 1) existing ultralight-like aircraft that do not meet the requirements for ultralight vehicles
- 2) aircraft assembled from eligible kits that meet a consensus standard
- 3) aircraft previously issued a special, light-sport category airworthiness certificate.

Certain type-certificated aircraft that meet the above criteria may also be operated with a light-sport pilot certificate.

An ultralight is a vehicle that is manned by one occupant for recreation or sport purposes. It does not have a U.S. or foreign airworthiness certificate. If unpowered, it weighs less than 155 lbs. If powered, it weighs less than 254 lbs. empty, has a fuel capacity not exceeding five U.S. gallons, is incapable of more than 55 knots airspeed in level flight, and has a power-off stall speed which does not exceed 24 knots.

There are maintenance and inspection requirements for light-sport aircraft certificated as an experimental light-sport aircraft or special light-sport aircraft. There are also new pilot training and certification requirements for:

- a sport pilot certificate,
- a sport pilot rating at the flight instructor certificate level,
- two category ratings — weight-shift-control and powered parachute, both with land and sea class ratings at the private pilot certificate level, and
- a repairman certificate — light-sport aircraft with an inspection or maintenance rating.

FAA certificated pilots and flight instructors exercising sport pilot privileges must hold a valid U.S. driver's license or FAA medical certificate.

The rule will cost approximately \$158.4 million (discounted) over nearly 10 years. Industry costs will be roughly \$144.5 million (discounted), of which \$98.9 million (discounted) represents out-of-pocket expenses. Government costs are approximately \$13.9 million (discounted). The estimated potential benefits range from \$57.7 million to \$220.3 million (discounted).

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